

17/11/21

THE REV.
WILLIAM MORLEY PUNSHON, LL.D.

A
Memorial Sermon

PREACHED AT
GEORGE STREET CHAPEL, GRIMSBY,
BEFORE THE HULL DISTRICT MEETING.

BY
THOMAS M'CULLAGH.

(PUBLISHED AT THE REQUEST OF THE MEETING.)

WITH SOME
PERSONAL RECOLLECTIONS OF DR. PUNSHON'S
EARLIER LIFE AND MINISTRY.

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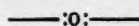
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This Memorial Sermon, preached at Grimsby during the Session of the Hull District Meeting, was also preached in Waltham Street Chapel, Hull, with which place of worship Dr. Punshon was connected in his youth, when he received the Gospel salvation. As now printed, it differs from the spoken discourse only in some verbal alterations and a few slight additions.

The Personal Recollections were not given in the pulpit, and are now published for the first time. Until a complete biography appears, they may interest and, it is hoped, profit that large number of persons—now, doubtless, the majority

of his admirers—who love Dr. Punshon's memory, but who, from their own comparative youth, could not have known him during the years of his early ministry. The author hopes that his readers will not put down to egotism the many references to himself. He could not easily avoid them in recording PERSONAL recollections.

HULL, June, 1881.

A MEMORIAL SERMON.

“He was a burning and a shining light.”—*JOHN* v. 35.

“An eloquent man, and mighty in the Scriptures.”—*ACTS* xviii. 24.

“For all things are yours ; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas.”
—*1 CORINTHIANS* iii. 21, 22.

“And they glorified God in me.”—*GALATIANS* i. 24.

IN preaching a memorial sermon on the life, character, ministry, and death of William Morley Punshon before the Hull District meeting, I need offer no apology. With this District he was connected by the strong tie of his personal conversion. If Doncaster was the place of his birth, Hull was the place of his second birth. When preaching in Waltham-street Chapel, at the Conference of 1858, becoming unwontedly excited, he exclaimed : “You may call me enthusiastic ; but is it any wonder if I appear so, in the very place where my own chains fell off ?” At

Hull, too, he was admitted to membership in the Society, and at Hull he began Church work.

The four passages which I have selected as a text are not, I hope, inappropriate. We may venture to say of the departed minister, I believe, without irreverence, what our Lord said of John the Baptist : "He was a burning and a shining light." In addition to the ardour of his love and the fervency of his zeal, and to the unobscured clearness with which he held forth the word of life, the most striking characteristic of his mind and ministry was brilliance,—an almost dazzling brilliance. Still more appropriate to this gifted minister is the description given of that man of apostolic usefulness and of almost apostolic rank, Apollos : "An eloquent man, and mighty in the Scriptures." Dr. Punshon's oratorical powers were simply marvellous. And while eloquent, as a preacher he was mighty in the Scriptures. Not that he dealt much in verbal and grammatical criticism ; not that his pulpit discourses were largely exegetical or theological ; but that they were full of Gospel truth, and teemed throughout with Bible

doctrine, allusion, phrase, and fact. While by certain qualities of his preaching he excited the imagination of his hearers, and by others he wrought upon their feelings, it was "by manifestation of the truth" that he commended himself "to every man's conscience in the sight of God."

The third passage of my fourfold text: "For all things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas," reminds us that the Christian ministry, with its variety of gifts, acquirements, and styles of preaching, is the blessed property of the Church, and has its reason to be in the good of redeemed man. And if the eminent minister, whose loss the whole Connexion is mourning now, were ours, are we not responsible as a Church for the use we may have made of his splendid ministry?

The last passage of the four: "And they glorified God in me," is the one upon which I wish more particularly to dwell, as it is the most practical for ourselves in relation to the deceased. It suggests our personal duty while thinking and speaking of him whom God gave and has now taken away. While

thinking of the burning and shining light we can only mourn that the lamp has been extinguished before the oil was all consumed. While speaking of the "eloquent man, and mighty in the Scriptures," we can merely deplore that "the eloquent orator" whom the Lord of Hosts has taken away from our Judah lies silent with the voiceless in Norwood Cemetery. This modern Apollos was ours ; but, alas ! in the activities of a living ministry he is ours no longer. The Giver of all good has resumed His own gift. There remains to us, however, the practical duty, to glorify God in him. Let us try and perform this.

I. In glorifying God in His servant, we find an occasion in the Influences which conducted him to and fitted him for the Christian ministry.

1. Amongst the earliest of these,—subordinate, of course, to the light and leading of the Holy Spirit,—we recognise those connected with his godly parentage and kindred. His father was a Methodist from, I believe, the neighbourhood of Newcastle-on-Tyne, who had settled in business at Doncaster. His

mother was a Methodist, the daughter of a Class-leader, Mr. William Morley of Doncaster, afterwards of Hull. Her sister was married to Benjamin Clough, one of the six missionaries who went to India with Dr. Coke. Both sisters were women of deep piety. *The Journal and Correspondence of Mrs. M. Clough, with an Introduction by Dr. Adam Clarke*, was published by her husband after her death. Mr. and Mrs. Punshon of Doncaster brought up their only child, William Morley, "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." By their own good example, by parental training, and by a religious education, they endeavoured to promote the best interests of their son. Whatever expectations they might have cherished with regard to his future course, they could scarcely picture in their most glorious visions the splendid career which he really has had. In their most roseate day-dreams they could scarcely see that their little boy would become one of the most popular preachers of his day; that his fame would spread to other lands; that he would become at an early age President of the Methodist Conference; that he

would die in harness as senior secretary of the great Missionary Society of which his uncle Clough was one of the early Missionaries ; and that his death would be deplored as a calamity throughout the Churches, and produce even something like a national regret. Or did his parents more likely foresee a more proximate issue : that by their own premature decease their beloved child would be orphaned early ; and have to leave the house where he was born while yet a little boy ? Whether they saw this or not, it actually occurred. For the parents of whom he was so early deprived he cherished a loving remembrance, and, like William Cowper, he has enshrined his mother's memory in tender verse. In a little volume of poetry which he published under the pseudonym of " Wilfrid " during his probation as a minister, are the following lines on " The Anniversary of a Mother's Death : "

" The twelfth of June ! the twelfth of June !

Sad thoughts its memory brings ;

Sad as the low and plaintive tune

The lonely night-bird sings.

For life-like sorrows of the past
Come rushing o'er my brain,
And all their poison'd arrows cast,
And wound me o'er again.

"My Mother ! oft of old thy smile
Had charm'd me into rest,
And robb'd my spirit of its guile,
And made my boyhood blest ;
And, rising o'er my troubled mind,
I think I see thee now ;
And love's pure light, serene and kind,
Is resting on thy brow.

"But thou art gone ! and I am left
A heritage of tears ;
My mourning soul, too soon bereft,
Thy smile no longer cheers.
And bitterly the thought intrudes,
As through the world I roam :—
Its cities are but solitudes,
For I have lost my home.

"Why didst thou die, my Mother ? why
Deprive me of my guide ?
Oh ! oft with aching heart I sigh,
And grieve that thou hast died ;
For, what with frowning skies above,
And struggling fears within,
I'm sure I need a Mother's love,
To woo my soul from sin.

“ But, Mother, thou art happier far,
Thou standest near the throne ;
And I must wage my spirit's war,
And brave the world alone.
Then, oh, let thy pure spirit be
For ever hovering near ;
And in all trial whisper me :—
‘ Thy Mother watches here.’ ”

2. In the early conversion of William Morley Punshon we have the most potent of the influences by which he was led onward to the ministry, and in it we have the chief reason for glorifying God in him. This important event occurred at Hull, to which town he had removed after the death of his parents, to be under the care of his grandfather, and employed in his office. He was about fifteen years of age when the change took place which made him “ a new creature in Christ Jesus.” His early conversion may be regarded, I think, as the result, in part at least, of godly parental training. His mother's death, too, which occurred about a year before, had something to do with it ; for it deepened the religious impressions which her own example and teachings,

together with a sermon preached by the late excellent William Henry Taylor, had produced upon the mind of her son. It was, however, through the ministry of Samuel Romilly Hall at Hull that the youth of fifteen was led to make a full closure with Christ. Mr. Hall was then a probationer in his third year, and he remained only one year in Hull. If any one were disposed to draw inferences unfavourable to the preacher from the brevity of his stay in the circuit, how mistaken he would be in his conclusion. "Let him know," says St. James, "that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins." As the convert in this instance became a minister whose praise and labours were in all the Churches, it is impossible to calculate the greatness of the number of souls saved and the vastness of the multitude of sins hidden by a forgiving God. Let no one despise the youth of a stripling preacher, or of his boy-convert, or undervalue the ministry whose duration in a circuit is measured by a single year!

Young Punshon's conversion was the turning point

in his life, and decided the question whether he was to be engaged in commerce or become an ambassador for Christ. Without a Scriptural conversion the door of the Wesleyan ministry would have been closed against him, no matter how wonderful his talents might be. The questions asked in relation to candidates for the ministry, "Has he grace?" "Has he gifts?" are most important; but with us the former is paramount to the latter. May it be so to the end of time!

3. His Church-membership and early Christian work contributed further to lead him towards and fit him for the holy ministry. He met in both class and private band. From the George-yard Leaders'-meeting Minute-book, I have ascertained that he was proposed, with nine others, for admission into Society at a Leaders'-meeting held on the 23rd of May, 1839. He was then within six days of being fifteen years of age. In an old book belonging to the Waltham-street Circuit, of which I am at present the custodian, there is a complete list of the Members of Society for the year 1840. In looking over

the list I was greatly interested—as I was in examining the Minute-book—to find in it the name “*Wm. M. Punshon.*” There are eleven other names in the class to which his belongs, that of the leader being John Lowther. The form of Christian fellowship to which he was led in his boyhood by the providence and grace of God he advocated when he became a man and a minister. His first prose publication, issued during his novitiate at Carlisle, was a *brochure* in favour of the Class-meeting, written with much exuberance of metaphor, and to which, with his characteristic addiction to figure, he gave the title of “Tabor.”

At Hull, he helped to form an association of youths, all of whom, numbering eight or ten, including Dr. Lyth, entered the ministry. He became a prayer-leader and secretary of the York-street Sunday school,—the same school which is now taught at Oxford-street. He was yet too young for the Local Preachers’ Plan, but it is known that he preached his first sermon on August 2nd, 1840, at Ellerby, near Hull. At Sunderland, to which he re-

moved shortly after, to the office of his uncle Panton, he became an accredited local preacher in 1842, under the superintendency of Thomas H. Squance, the friend and former fellow-missionary of his uncle Clough. In associating with his kindred in the county Durham—the Pantons of Sunderland and the Coulthards of Gateshead—he breathed the same religious atmosphere as when mixing with the Morleys of Doncaster and Hull. These favourable surroundings contributed to strengthen his spiritual and denominational attachments, and, no doubt, helped the resolve to which he gave expression before his ordination, that as Methodism was his spiritual birthplace, it should be his spiritual home. Meanwhile, his superintendent, Mr. Squance, and his uncle, Mr. Clough, perceiving that the Lord had called the youth to the full work of the ministry, urged him to obey the call. As the result, but not without prayer and mental struggle, he went to Woolwich, to Mr. Clough's, in September, 1843, to prepare for his evident future. In 1844, having been approved of by the March Quarterly Meeting of the

Deptford Circuit, and having passed examinations at the May District Meeting in London and the July Examination Committee, he was accepted by the Conference of that year as a candidate for the ministry. Having traced for you the processes by which this important consummation was reached, I invite you to glorify God in him.

II. In Dr. Punshon's natural gifts, consecrated, as they were, to the service of Christ, we have additional reasons for glorifying God. Chief amongst these were memory, imagination, sympathy, and utterance.

1. Memory was amongst the most remarkable of his mental powers, and with it nature had lavishly endowed him. Its power of retentiveness for words as well as thoughts was something marvellous. I have myself heard him recite with unflinching accuracy whole pages of his favourite authors in prose as well as verse. This wonderful faculty, which binds us to the past, the repertory of knowledge, and without which learning would be lost as fast as it was ac-

quired, by its remarkable strength in his case, greatly aided him in the acquisition and retention of knowledge. It was, too, some compensation for the leisure for close study which he lacked, and which less popular ministers may command. It was this which made him the memoriter preacher that he could scarcely help being. It was facile work for him to write his mental compositions on the tablets of his memory, and, I believe, it was easier for him to remember what he had thus written than to forget. The high uses to which memory may be put in the service of God, no one has shown in more beautiful thoughts and words than he himself, in his remarkable sermon on "Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee," &c. In the uses to which he applied his own consecrated memory we may glorify God in him.

2. Imagination was another distinguishing quality of Dr. Punshon's mind. He possessed in considerable strength the grand faculty which has created our loftiest poetry, and without which oratory could

never reach its highest flights. In the case of my lamented friend, the results were seen in his two poetical publications—*Lays of Hope*, the offspring of his youth, and *Sabbath Chimes*, the creation of his more matured genius—and still more in the brilliance and beauty with which his pulpit and platform discourses were illumined and adorned. Nor did he offer “strange fire” in illustrating sacred themes with the light of a sanctified imagination. He only did what some of the inspired writers had done before him. The Bible, we know, is not a dull, prosaic book. Much of it is poetical in conception, and even poetical in structure, and sparkles with the radiance of imaginative thought. If a preacher be endowed with this splendid gift, he may employ it, as I believe our brother did, to the glory of God.

3. Sympathy was another power which was possessed and shown by him whose loss we mourn. Emotional, although not weakly so, but in a controllable degree, he had a heart to feel as well as an imagination to conceive. While addressing the understanding of his hearers and grappling with their

consciences, he entered into their feelings, and identified himself with their joys and sorrows, hopes and fears. Endowed himself with a delicate sensibility, he unlocked their hearts with the key of sympathy, and touched the chords of their finest feelings. He dealt not with the mystical or transcendental, but gave not unfrequently one of those touches of nature which make the whole world kin. In his sermons there was quite as much of heart as of head. And it was the heart-element which made them popular with the masses, whilst they were admired by the cultured for their other qualities as well. Had the electric current of sympathy not run through his discourses ; had they no merits but the merely intellectual, then men would have admired them principally for the splendour of the rhetoric, just as men admire a display of fireworks. But the amount of sanctified humanness connected with his ministry made it plain that the "treasure" was "in an earthen vessel ;" and his hearers must have felt that the powerful Elijah who addressed them was, after all, "a man of like passions" with themselves.

4. His gift of utterance, taken in combination with his mental characteristics, made him, like Apollos, "an eloquent man." His elocutionary powers I have never heard equalled, much less surpassed; and he exercised them with remarkable effectiveness whether he extemporised, recited, or read. In hearing him read the lessons in public worship it was scarcely possible to be inattentive to God's Word. He caught the meaning of the sacred writers, entered into their spirit, and modulated his voice in harmony with the varying sentiments and feelings which were expressed. He was a master of emphasis, and knew where and how to ring out the emphatic word, which he did sometimes with thrilling effect. He could excite a congregation by the way in which he read certain chapters of the Bible which are especially graphic or dramatic. No one who ever heard him read the ninth chapter of St. John's Gospel can easily forget it. He made the scene live before the audience until you thought you saw and heard the actors,—Jesus and His disciples, the blind man and his parents, and the villanous Pharisees.

I was once told that a Unitarian, who heard him read that chapter at a public service at Sheffield, was won over to orthodoxy by an emphasis placed on the word "man," in the passage : " Since the world began was it not heard that any *man* opened the eyes of one that was born blind."

His gift of utterance was a talent neither buried nor misapplied. It was employed on themes which relate to God and the soul, redemption and eternity ; —themes which immeasurably transcend those which engage the eloquence of the senate and the bar. His thoughts were clothed in chosen words and illustrated with much opulence of imagery. His sentences were those of a skilled rhetorician, having a rhythm of their own, and constructed almost with the perfection of metrical composition. Under the spells of his enchanting oratory, one felt like Milton's Comus in listening to the lost lady in the wood :

" Can any mortal measure of earth's mould
Breathe such Divine, enchanting ravishment ?
Sure something holy lodges in that breast,
And with these raptures moves the vocal air
To testify his hidden residence."

And yet with his wonderful eloquence he faithfully set forth the Gospel in its simplicity. Having reference to the doctrinal teaching of his discourses and, to the unction from the Holy One, he could say, as truthfully as any simple and uncultured but successful preacher of the same Gospel: "My speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power."

III. In the Christian character and graces of Dr. Punshon we have much reason for glorifying God in him.

1. The personal godliness of a popular minister is generally well known, for "the fierce light which beats upon a throne" beats more or less upon every conspicuous position. Of Dr. Punshon's noble character I need say but little. It was worthy of the training which he received from godly parents in a religious home. At the basis of his character lay the fact of his early conversion. By the grace of God he was what he was. The result was that his character

was built up in beautiful symmetry and strength, and was at once simple, solid, massive, stable.

2. His Christian graces consisted of whatsoever things are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report. The fruits of the Spirit,—love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance,—were brought forth by him to the glory of God. Three distinguishing features of his piety were simplicity, humility, brotherliness. At the very first he received the Kingdom of God as a little child, and with a child-like faith he retained it to the end.

Not less remarkable was his great humility. Few ministers have had more numerous incentives to vanity, to pride, to self-importance. Crowds gathered to hear him wherever he went ; while followed by the masses, the educated and tasteful heard him with delight. With his brethren in the ministry he was “a man greatly beloved.” They elected him into the Hundred at the earliest moment he was eligible,—a unique distinction. They placed him in the chair of the Conference when, after a few years of absence,

they received him back with thankful hearts from Canada. He was known and honoured in other Churches. He was respected by the secular press and the general public, and whenever illness laid him aside, it was made known throughout the country, as in the case of princes and ministers of state. Some in their extravagant admiration offered him the adulation of hero-worship. Like the idolaters at Lystra, who came with oxen and garlands to sacrifice to Paul and Barnabas, deeming them gods in the likeness of men, these admirers presented to him unstintedly the incense of indiscriminating praise. And yet his head was not turned, but by the grace of God he was "clothed with humility."

Brotherliness was a conspicuous virtue of this gifted minister. It resulted partly from his modest estimate of his own excellencies; partly from a generous recognition of the merits of his brethren; and partly from the warmth of his affections sanctified by grace. The sense of self-importance, leading to airs of superiority, which in some instances interfere with the fraternal in feeling and action, did not exist

in his case. It was his pride, not that he rose head and shoulders above his brethren, but that he was one of what he himself called "The great Brotherhood of Methodist Preachers."

IV. The character of Dr. Punshon's ministry constitutes a ground for glorifying God in him. His ministry was evangelical, faithful, and successful.

1. His popularity was not secured by the sacrifice of simple Gospel truth. He did not discard the plain, old-fashioned doctrines of "repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ" for the leading questions of the day in politics, in discovery, in material and intellectual progress. He did not, like some, discuss the novel speculations of the "thinkers" of the age instead of Christ crucified. Let young ministers ponder this ; the most popular preacher of the age was not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, but was intensely evangelical. His sermons were not streams of irrelevant eloquence, slightly tintured with a few drops of Gospel ; they flowed deep and full with "the truth as it is in Jesus,"

and sparkled bright and clear with the water of life.

2. His ministry was faithful. He warned as well as taught. This was a characteristic of his lectures as well as of his sermons. In his fine oration, "Daniel in Babylon," for instance, he comes to close quarters with the consciences of young men. As a preacher he exposed folly, unmasked hypocrisy, lashed vice, and, like his Master, failed not to speak of "the damnation of hell."

3. In calling sinners to repentance, in edifying the Church, and in defending the faith, his ministry was a ministry of success. He mourned, I believe, that he did not see more fruit for his labours; yet fruit he had. I remember one occasion myself, when eighteen persons professed to find peace at the prayer-meeting after his sermon. On Easter Sunday last, while his mortal remains were still unburied, I referred to his death in the pulpit of Waltham-street Chapel. At the close of the service a commercial gentleman visiting Hull, who had come from his hotel to the chapel, thanked me for my references to

the deceased, and added, "Dr. Punshon was the means of my own conversion when he was stationed in Sheffield." Still I am aware that some ministers who give themselves up to evangelistic work may count up more converts; but the measure of ministerial success can never be fully known until the day shall declare how much of the increase which God gives is due, under God, to Paul who plants, and how much to Apollos who waters.

Success in the ministry should not be gauged exclusively by the statistics of conversion. If a minister feed the flock of God, instructing the ignorant, comforting the disconsolate, encouraging the timid, helping the weak,—is not that also success? Our greatly gifted brother, moreover, caused places of worship to spring up where none, or inadequate ones, existed before, creating for the purpose a special fund by his single-handed efforts. He gathered, as at Bayswater, entirely new congregations, and excelled all his brethren in raising means and men for propagating the Gospel throughout the world. In matters of administration and in ecclesiastical states-

manship his gifts were of rare excellence, and were exercised with great advantage to the work of God in connection with both the British and Canadian Conferences. Success? He had it in the United Kingdom, and on the American continent from the Atlantic to the Pacific. Success! His thirty-six years' ministry was one brilliant career of uninterrupted success! We glorify God in him.

V. Can we glorify God in the death of His servant? We ought, wherever the blessed sequence applies; and it does in the present instance: "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." And yet, I confess for myself, I have scarcely ever found it more difficult to reconcile myself to a death than to this. Even now I cannot understand it: "When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me." The tidings of that death in the evening papers on the fourteenth day of April last came upon the whole Connexion with painful surprise, occasioning bewilderment and sorrow.

For some months before his decease, Dr. Punshon

felt unwell. In a letter written to myself, dated the 15th December last, he says : “ I am sorry to hear of your sick house ; I hope the cloud will soon be lifted. We are in the valley of the shadow. John William grows worse and weaker almost daily ; and I am far from well, suffering from sleeplessness and chronic dyspepsia, with other and sequent ailments ; mourning, moreover, over dear, good Mr. Panton’s death, — dear to me as a brother.”

John William passed away at Bournemouth not many weeks afterwards, with the word “ Jesus ! ” on his lips, and the heartstricken father laid in the grave with his eldest son some of his own most fondly-cherished hopes. It was not at Bournemouth only that he had from time to time to seek the possession of a burying-place to bury his dead out of his sight. At Sheffield and Leeds he lost two infant children ; and at Kensal Green Cemetery may be seen their mother’s grave. In connection with his Canadian sojourn were the mournful memories of the deaths of a wife and a daughter, and that daughter his first-born child.

While his heart was aching for the loss of his eldest son, he undertook a journey with Mrs. Punshon and other friends to the shores of the Mediterranean, in the hope that the change might bring relief from sorrow and improvement in health. This hope was doomed to disappointment ; and he had to make the long homeward journey from Genoa, after an alarming attack, in weakness and suffering. There is something that excites the imagination and awakens sympathy in the picture of the invalid minister, whose life was precious to thousands, travelling night and day amid the glories of Alpine scenery, through the Mont Cenis tunnel, along the weird valleys of Savoy, amongst the vineyards of France, across the silver streak of sea, to reach his longed-for home in London, but really, as the issue proved, to die in his nest.

Dr. Punshon had no desire to die ; the love of life with him was strong. No one enjoyed more what he himself called "the luxury of living." His intuitive perception of the beautiful in natural scenery, in art, in literature, brought him pleasures

to which many are strangers. His intensely social nature saved him from every tendency to misanthropy, and gave him a keen relish for the society of the gifted and the good. His spiritual sympathies gave him a yearning for the salvation of souls ; and his studies, and advocacy, and office, in connection with Christian Missions, made those sympathies cosmopolitan. Notwithstanding his desire for life, feeling strange symptoms about his heart, he referred occasionally during his last few weeks to the possibility of dying soon. In these conversations he said that he did not ask for the triumphant death that some had had, but for peace, adding, " My testimony is my life." He gave as his reasons for wishing to live, not only, " for Mary's sake " (Mrs. Punshon) and others, but, he continued, " I wish to live that I may serve God better than I have ever served Him."

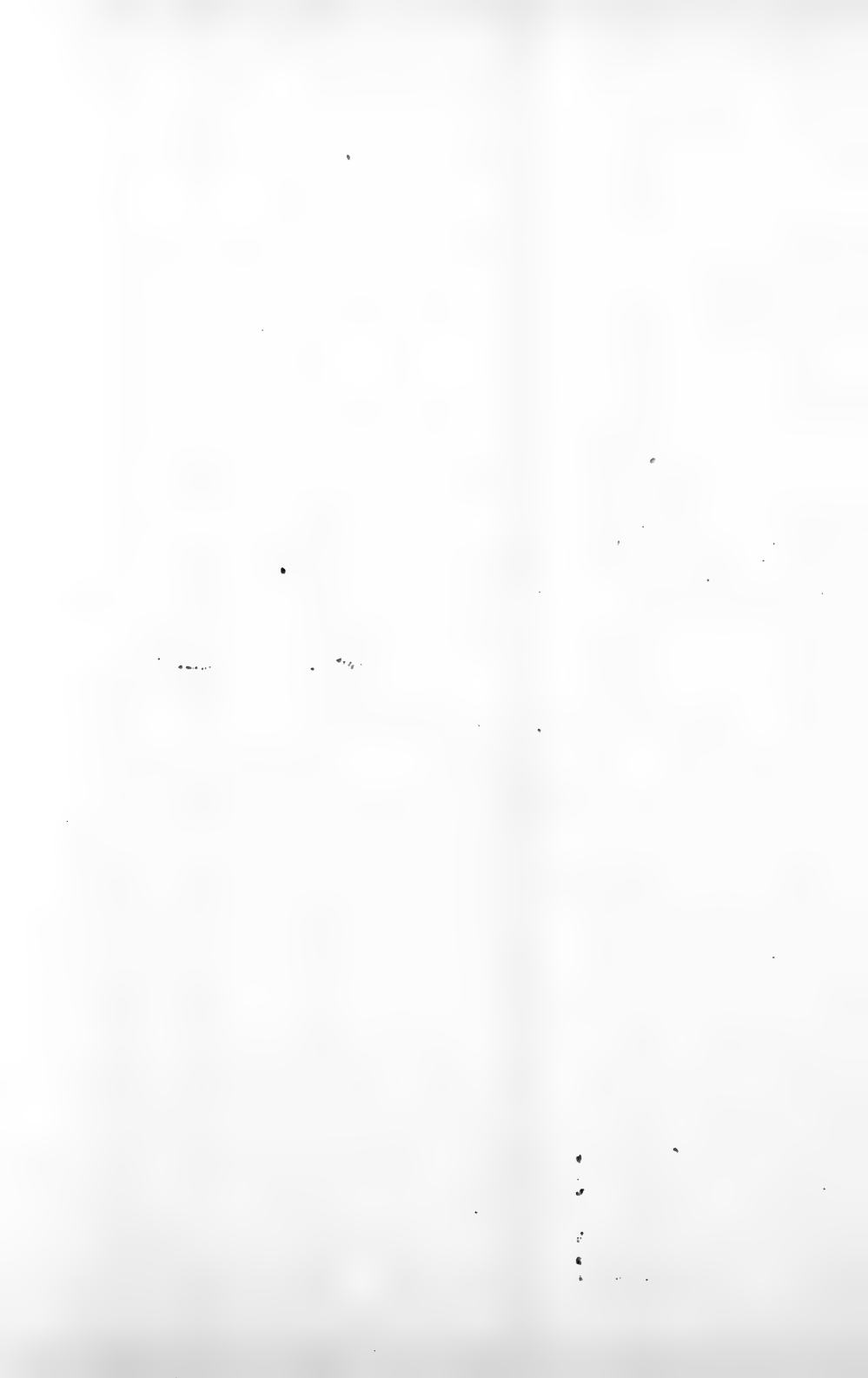
Only a week after the return home, the end came. A fatal termination was unexpected by the doctors, and by his family. He spent a part of his last day on earth, unaware that Heaven was so very near, in reading. He sat down to his desk, worked a little

among his papers, and then rearranged them with characteristic orderliness. An attached Canadian friend (the Rev. Hugh Johnstone), whose love to him was wonderful, bid him farewell on Wednesday night, expressing a hope of seeing him in Canada before long. Mr. Osborn, his colleague at the Mission House, conversed and prayed with him after eleven o'clock that night, and then took his departure, not apprehending any immediate danger. Becoming worse, as he sat in his chair, to which he walked unaided, he said to Mrs. Punshon and other relations who were present, "You have come to see me die!" They were distressed at the saying, but thought it impossible that God would take him from them. The complication of diseases under which he was suffering, of which bronchial affection, congested pneumonia, and heart disturbance were the principal, developed worse symptoms, especially the latter. "Am I dying, doctor?" he asked his medical attendant, who, seeing hope was passed, replied in the affirmative. It was less than half an hour before he expired that the awful truth forced itself upon his

friends that the end was come. There was little time for testimonies and messages. To his agonised wife he said, "I have loved you fondly; love Jesus, and meet me in Heaven!" For his youngest son, Percy, who had not got back from Italy, he left the message, "Love Jesus, and meet me in Heaven!" In relation to his own state, he said, "I feel that Jesus is a living, bright reality. Jesus! Jesus! Jesus!" These, I believe, were the last words spoken by the wonderfully eloquent tongue which for more than thirty-six years had preached with fidelity and success, "Jesus and the Resurrection." And when he had said this he fell asleep.

I shall not attempt to appraise the loss which this death inflicts. Our Church is deprived of its foremost minister; our ministry of its brightest ornament. We shall miss him in the pulpit, on the platform, in the Committee-room; but we shall miss him most in the Conference. There his spirit was beautiful, his counsel safe, his influence mighty. He was as wise as he was brilliant, and as good as he was wise.

Devout men carried William Morley Punshon to his burial at Eastertide, when Christian hope triumphs over sorrow. As I looked down into the grave, and saw the coffin covered with wreaths, I thought, "Ah! my beloved friend served his own generation by the will of God; he has fallen on sleep, and will see corruption; but there is ONE in whom he trusted, whom God raised again, who saw no corruption!" To His voice let all who hear me listen: "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die."



SOME PERSONAL RECOLLECTIONS
OF
DR. PUNSHON'S
EARLIER LIFE AND MINISTRY.

SOME PERSONAL RECOLLECTIONS

OF

DR. PUNSHON'S EARLIER LIFE AND MINISTRY.

THE JULY EXAMINATION, 1844.

IN July, 1844, fifty-six candidates for the ministry, of whom I was one, were examined together in the Morning Chapel, City-road. When the roll was called, a young man of twenty, evidently keen of eye, and with curly locks, answered to the name of William Morley Punshon. On successive days I heard his *viva voce* examination, and his written answers to certain printed questions. There was nothing in these that I can remember to find fault with; but, on the other hand, there was nothing to indicate that this particular candidate would so far excel his brethren as to become the foremost Methodist preacher of his day. I do not recollect that we spoke to one another during the days we stood face to face at City-road. After our appointment to circuits by the Conference of the

following year—he to Whitehaven and I to Workington—we very early formed the friendship which has stood the strain of thirty-six years. After meeting in Cumberland, one of our earliest conversations was on the incidents of the July Examination. We agreed that a few of the committee were unnecessarily severe with some of the candidates. With the President, John Scott, there was nothing to complain of; but Dr. Bunting, “behind the throne, and greater than the throne,” who possessed a giant’s power, used it like a giant; at least, so thought some of the examinees. One, who declined to promise for the foreign work, on the ground that he did not feel *called* to go abroad, was told by the doctor that by-and-by he would feel called only to London, Liverpool, or Manchester, whereas the Conference might think that he was called to Banff or Inverness. To another, who in his innocency quoted from a book written by an American Methodist minister, he gave a sharp reproof for daring to mention the book before the committee. “We don’t want it here,” said he, adding, with a rasping emphasis, “nor ‘Entranced Females’ either!” This brought to his feet the author of *The Entranced Female*, who was present, and who defended his little book with spirit. In the encounter between the two great men of the committee, the half-scared candidate and his luckless reference were forgotten. A dozen years after this, when stationed in London, I had opportunities of knowing

Dr. Bunting more intimately, and found out that behind his severity of manner there beat a fatherly heart, and that he was as kind as he was great. Young Punshon fared better before the July committee than some of his brother candidates; but he told me that at the close of his examination at the May District Meeting he was rather worried by the number of questioners. Having afterwards to read some verses from the Bible, that the meeting might judge of the way in which he read the lessons in public worship, he created a smile by the passage which, without design, fell to his lot: "How are they increased that trouble me! Many are they that rise up against me," &c.

It was wonderful how well he remembered the names and other particulars of his fellow-candidates of 1844. He felt gratified in being associated with brethren some of whom, in process of time, made their mark in the Connexion. Without naming all such, there were three—John D. Geden, Benjamin Hellier, and Samuel Coley—who became eventually distinguished members of the tutorial staff of our Theological Institution. Mr. Geden, now an Old Testament revisionist, was Mr. Punshon's colleague for one year at Newcastle-on-Tyne. The name of Samuel Coley will appear on the death-roll next Conference in connection with that of William Morley Punshon. Neither of the two was of age when they appeared before the July

committee; one became the foremost preacher of the Connexion, and the other second in popularity only to him; and both of them died at an age when great men are considered to be merely in their prime. When I think of these two fellow-candidates, one of them my beloved colleague at City-road, the other my earliest and dearest ministerial friend, and that I survive them both, I adopt a saying which I heard one of them once use: "I am ashamed to be alive when better men are dead."

HIS FIRST MISSIONARY SPEECH.

Mr. Punshon's first missionary speech as a minister (he had spoken previously as a local preacher) it was my happiness to hear. It was delivered at Harrington, a quaint little sea-port, then in the Whitehaven circuit. As I was the "stranger" from Workington, he urged me, as "the deputation," to make "the collection speech." I was suffering with hoarseness in consequence of a cold, and so I resolutely refused. As I listened to his oration, for such it was, I felt very thankful for my hoarseness, for I do not think I could have spoken after such a speech. I was prepared for something good, as accounts reached Workington almost daily of the wonderful young preacher who had come to Whitehaven. These reports I had largely dis-

counted as the usual exaggerated estimates of "new brooms." But when I heard for myself, I found that the half had not been told me, nor even the tenth. The rush of brilliant thoughts and burning words, the perfect whirlwind of eloquence, almost took away my breath. I do not know that I was more enraptured with his speeches at Exeter Hall in after years, than with that first platform effort during the first few weeks of his ministry. We used to call it his "Excitements Speech," as he dwelt in it upon the excitements of novelty, opposition, and success, by which the missionary enterprise had been supported in turns, until at last it came to rest upon principle. I no longer wondered that such an orator succeeded in filling the large, half-empty chapel at Whitehaven with admiring hearers, before his first month in the circuit was over.

HIS FIRST DISTRICT MEETING.

In the May of 1846 he attended his first District Meeting at Carlisle. He and I were lodged together at a village two miles from the city, and as we had to preach on successive mornings at five o'clock an early start was necessary. We arranged between us that he was to remain awake all night the first night to waken me, as I had to preach the first morning. I promised to do

the same for him the next night ; but, alas ! the willing spirit was overmatched by the weak flesh, and the watchman overslept himself. Finding ourselves considerably behind time, in order to recover some of it we ran the whole of the two miles, but, unlike Peter and John, one did not outrun the other. Arrived at the chapel we found the congregation singing, and the Rev. Samuel Rowe giving out a hymn from his pew. Mr. Punshon entered the unoccupied pulpit, and preached a sermon remarkably beautiful and eloquent. After the service I breakfasted with some of the ministers at the house of Mr. James ; the preacher of the morning not being present, much of the conversation at the breakfast-table turned on the sermon, wonderful from any one, but especially from a probationer in his first year. Admiration was expressed by all.

At this first District Meeting he paid marked attention to the business transacted, although, as a probationer, he had neither voice nor vote in the meeting. His attention to details, his relish for work, and his cultivation of business habits, were remarkable in one of his imaginative powers, and no doubt contributed to make him the able administrator as superintendent of a circuit, chairman of a district, President of the Conference, and missionary secretary, which he proved himself afterwards to be.

A VISIT TO THE LAKES.

During our first summer in Cumberland we went together to Keswick to speak at a tea meeting. We took the opportunity of the visit to see as much of the Lakes as we could. To myself it was an exquisite pleasure to pay my first visit to that romantic neighbourhood in company with one whose poetical susceptibilities and tastes were in harmony with the scenery, and who, in other respects, was a genial and charming companion. To hear his admiring comments on the varying scenes, and by sympathy to share in his raptures, greatly added to my own enjoyment. I found, too, that the poetical associations of the district invested the landscapes with additional attractions to him. He remembered that we were in the region of the Lake Poets as well as at the Lakes. He gazed with interest on Greta Hall, at the foot of Skiddaw, so long the residence of Southey, then but three years dead ; and although we did not on this occasion extend our excursion as far as Rydal Mount, yet my friend quoted Wordsworth. In *Lays of Hope*, published soon after this visit, are some lines on "Lowdore," in which the author says more in praise of Southey than of the waterfall itself. This characteristic, resulting, no doubt, from the strength of his human sympathies, social instincts, and admiration of genius, I noticed about two years afterwards

at Gilsland, a charming Cumbrian spa between Carlisle and Hexham. Before speaking at the meeting for which we were engaged, we wandered about through the richly-wooded scenery and romantic glens, greatly admiring the views; but my friend forgot not to tell me that this same Gilsland figures in one of Sir Walter Scott's books, and with him this evidently gave to the place an increased interest. In speaking of the Scotch lochs he told me that, in sailing down Loch Katrine, in order to enjoy the neighbourhood with intenser relish, he read *The Lady of the Lake* all the time. His lecture on "Florence and Her Memories" shows that on the banks of the Arno he thought more about human genius than inanimate beauty. I confess to some sympathy with this disposition. When at Florence myself, after seeing the art treasures of the Pitti palace and the Uffizi, I desired to visit next the woods of Valombrosa, some miles away. A kind-hearted but unromantic fellow traveller, a Liverpool shipowner, put a check upon my purpose when I could give him no better reason than that Milton had been there more than two hundred years before, and that he found there the illustration which he employs in *Paradise Lost*:—

"Thick as autumnal leaves that strew the brooks
In Valombrosa."

At Lowdore a cannon was fired off that we might hear the echoes of the report. While the successive rever-

berations were running round and round the circle of mountains in which the Derwentwater Lake is enclosed, three tourists unexpectedly accosted us. They were Wesleyan ministers, viz., Edward Brice, William Willan, and Samuel Romilly Hall. Seeing Mr. Punshon paying the man in charge of the cannon for the shot just fired, one of them said, "Oh! it appears we are indebted to you for this treat! We are glad we got in time to hear your great gun."

The real "great gun" fired off later on that evening at the Keswick chapel, where we had a glorious meeting. The Whitehaven minister spoke in his usual style, and so excited were myself and the late Robert Haworth, who was then stationed at Keswick, that neither of us were able to go to sleep the livelong night, but we chatted until morning. The appearance of Mr. Hall at Lowdore must have carried back Mr. Punshon's mind to the time at Hull when he was brought into filial relation with God. In consequence of that change, he was able to enjoy his visit to the Lakes with higher and more blessed feelings than if it had not taken place. As he looked on mountain, and mere, and waterfall, this was the feeling: "*My* Father made them all!"

HIS FIRST CONFERENCE AND ORDINATION.

At the Conference of 1849, at which we were ordained, Mr. Punshon and I lodged together at Mr. Oxley's, Stocks, Manchester. At Oldham-street Chapel we sat side by side in a front pew of the gallery, and from our "coigne of vantage" we watched with intense interest the proceedings of Conference. We heard the two speeches of Thomas Jackson, one after his election to the chair, the other in introducing the question of "character," both delivered with solemn earnestness, and foreboding the disciplinary measures which followed and have made that Conference memorable. We witnessed the exciting scene when James Everett appeared at the bar, and was questioned with regard to his connection with the "Fly Sheets," and we heard the sentence of expulsion. I believe we had both left Manchester before the expulsion of Messrs. Dunn and Griffith. I know certainly that I was on a tour when it took place, and that I did not hear of it for at least a fortnight after the event. Mr. Punshon was much struck with the debating power of the Conference, and, notwithstanding his own special oratorical gifts, he greatly coveted this particular kind of ability, in which, however, he never reached the same excellence as that to which he attained in the prepared deliverances of the pulpit and platform. In this species of oratory, I know, he always regarded Dr.

Osborn as *facile princeps*, and frequently listened to him with admiration and wonder. At our public examination in Oldham-street Chapel, Mr. Punshon was called upon to speak, and delivered himself with unaffected modesty. In his theological examination in the Conference there was nothing remarkably striking in his answers. It was when he appeared on the Sunday afternoon in the pulpit of Ebenezer Chapel, Stocks, that he showed his wonderful powers. He preached from John x. 10, and as I was present, I was able to see that a considerable number of ministers had come to hear him, for his fame had already spread from Cumberland to other shires. Of course he also heard others preach at this Conference. His favourite preacher amongst those whom he then heard was George Steward; and as we listened to him one Sunday morning, uttering grand thoughts in lofty diction, my companion was excited with delight, notwithstanding Mr. Steward's strange and faulty elocution. The ordination service took place in Irwell-street Chapel, when thirty-seven young ministers were separated to the work and office of the ministry by the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery. Dr. Newton delivered the charge. Of the thirty-seven the names of only nineteen now remain on the Minutes of Conference. Amongst those who have "fallen on sleep" may be mentioned Benjamin Frankland, B.A., many years the Connexional Editor; William Hessle, one of a remarkable

family ; Michael C. Taylor, notable for his saintliness ; William Fox, who died at Preston ; Richard Woodfin, and others. Of those who remain to this present, are such able ministers as Dr. Rigg, Richard Roberts, John Roberts (A), Stephen P. Harvard, John McKenny, George Mather, with several more whom I need not name. Dr. Punshon held in affectionate regard his ministerial brethren, but took an especial interest in the ministers of his own year, "the men of '45," as he sometimes called them. Our present President, Mr. Jenkins, is one of the number, but having been in India in 1849, he was not ordained with the others in Manchester.

AFTER MARRIAGE AND ORDINATION.

At the Conference of 1849 Mr. Punshon was appointed to Newcastle-on-Tyne. As I was only fourteen miles off, at Shotley Bridge, I had many opportunities of continued intercourse with him. There was scarcely a village in my circuit to which I did not get him to come and preach. Our young wives, both born on the banks of the Tyne, got to know and love one another well. The first summer after marriage we took lodgings together at Tynemouth ; and that first seaside sojourn in our new relationships forms a green and sunny spot in the memories of Mrs.

M'Cullagh and myself, and was, I know, greatly enjoyed by Mr. and Mrs. Punshon. The events in the domestic history of our two friends were duly made known to us from time to time, especially the births of children. On the arrival of the firstborn he wrote, "God blessed me with a daughter about an hour ago;" and upon the birth of his eldest son he sent at once to tell us that "the heir of all the Punshons" had made his appearance. In one letter he speaks pleasantly of his infant daughter's "studies in gaslight," and in another he remarks playfully, "Our little Fanny bids fair to be a toothless prodigy; never a solitary ivory has eliminated himself, herself, or itself, to the present time." He consoled himself with the thought that "her intellectuals are developing before her animals and vegetables." Again he wrote to say that at last "a tooth has peeped above the horizon." All this may be regarded by some as very little, but I confess that as symptomatic of his human sympathies and fatherly feelings it helped to endear him all the more to me.

It was at Newcastle that Mr. Punshon formed his very ardent friendship with William Hirst, at present the Chairman of the Newcastle District. His well-known attachment to Dr. Gervase Smith dates from the still earlier period of their schoolboy days. It fell to the lot of this lifelong friend to pourtray, after her decease, in the pages of the *Magazine*, the brief life and beautiful character of the

first Mrs. Punshon, a task which he performed with a skilful and delicate hand, and with feeling and taste. This charming lady I met with at her father's at Gateshead, and knew her as Maria Ann Vickers, before she became the wife of my friend. Her qualities of head and heart made her a favourite amongst her acquaintances, but by few, I believe, was she loved more sincerely than by her now widowed successor, the present Mrs. Punshon.

His course at Newcastle was threatened with disturbance through the great agitation which followed the disciplinary action of the Manchester Conference. On September 9th, 1849, when about a week in his new circuit, he wrote to me: "This comes to open our epistolary campaign after the 'long vacation,' during which so much of eventfulness and so much of blessing have come upon us both." Towards the close of the letter, he says, "Are you quiet in Shotley? We have a good deal of agitation here, but unless Everett comes in person, I think it will soon subside." Matters, however, grew worse, and after a time he wrote to say, "I have had my first public hissing." This treatment he received from a mob which waylaid the Leaders' meeting at Brunswick Chapel, to express disapprobation for some act of discipline which had been exercised. Mr. Pemberton, one of the circuit ministers, afraid to face the mob, clambered over the walls of back yards to make good his escape to his own house. This

good man soon after fell into ill-health and died. His death, it was thought, was hastened by the anxieties and annoyances to which he was subjected in those times of strife. His colleague, Punshon, braver of heart, and favoured by nature with as fine a flow of spirits as ever man was blessed with, easily rose superior to the difficulties of the position. The tide of his pulpit popularity, moreover, swept all opposition before it. However some might condemn the action of the Conference of 1849, the people were irresistibly drawn to hear this young Apollos, this "eloquent man and mighty in the Scriptures." Indeed, persons came purposely from other circuits to hear him. At Hexham, twenty miles up the Tyne, there were some who ran down frequently to Newcastle to listen to him. When I removed from Hexham in 1849, I left behind me there two young men, members of society, who, with a taste for the beautiful in thought and speech, heard Mr. Punshon whenever they could. One of them was known to me as Joseph Parker, and is now known to fame as the pastor of the City Temple. The other, Nevison Lorraine, is at present the respected vicar of St. Paul's, Chiswick. In consequence of a division which took place in the Independent Church at Hexham, young Parker, who was brought up an Independent, and his father became worshippers with us at the Wesleyan Chapel. He met in the class of which Mrs. M'Cullagh was a member before our marriage, and to

this day she remembers his appearance and style of speaking in the class. The second sermon which he ever preached it was my happiness to hear. The text was: "If I whet My glittering sword, and Mine hand take hold on judgment," &c. ; and the sermon was delivered in the open air with masterly self-possession and fluency. Although Dr. Parker returned to his own people, he has always treated with affection and respect the Church with which he was connected for a few years. In speaking in his own City Temple, he vowed the vow in relation to Methodism, "In youth it sheltered me, and I'll protect it now!" I am not certain whether he made an occasional excursion to Newcastle or not to hear Mr. Punshon ; but it is certain that he did hear him occasionally. In his eloquent *éloge* on "the poet of the Christian pulpit," as he styled Dr. Punshon, he speaks as one familiar with his early ministry, and of hearing him as "he went forward with crashing energy of utterance, yet with tenderest beauty of speech." Mr. Lorraine, who often ran down from Hexham to Newcastle to hear the minister whom he so much admired, was present at Tranby on the morning of the funeral. As with heavy heart I spoke to him and to William J. Tweddle and to William Hirst, many early memories were awakened of him whose unexpected death had brought us together. In my sadness I sought comfort in thoughts of the Divine Immutability: "All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of

man as the flower of grass : the grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away ; but the word of the Lord endureth for ever."

HIS RUSTICATION.

At the Conference of 1852 Mr. Punshon was appointed to the Sheffield East Circuit, to reside at Thorncliffe, about seven miles from the town. This was rustication, not in the University sense of penal temporary dismissal into the country, but in the sense of having a really rural residence, and of doing village pastoral work. Now this was just the kind of appointment he did not like. His gregarious instincts were strong, and he must have been conscious of his own capacity, through Divine grace, of stirring the masses of large towns. Besides, his growing popularity was bringing upon him from all parts of the Connexion urgent requests for special pulpit and platform service, which he found it difficult to resist, and with many of which he had a strong inclination to comply. This could not be done without considerable inconvenience. Thorncliffe and Chapeltown, at which latter his residence was situated, had not then, what they have now, railway communication, nor any public conveyance, except, I believe, a kind of coach which ran to Sheffield on market-

days. Having resided successively in the not inconsiderable port of Whitehaven, the venerable city of Carlisle, the prosperous town of Newcastle-on-Tyne, "the metropolis of the north," as its inhabitants delight to call it, and then to be appointed to reside, not in Sheffield itself, with which he would have been content, but in a remote village of the Sheffield East Circuit, it is no wonder that he felt some disappointment; still, he was too godly to complain, and so he set himself loyally to adapt himself to his new environments. When he had been about a week in his new circuit he wrote me of his domicile, condition, and prospects, as follows: "From my own ingle nook, the parlour of a tumble-down house,—venerable from its antiquity, snug from cottageativeness, pleasant from its rurality, remarkable for the combination of its styles of architecture, inconvenient because of low roofs and unexpected steps which come upon you in strange places, and yet charming because it is one's own,—I write to assure your Macship that I am still your affectionate friend and brother."

"This certainly," he continued, "is a new style of life for me, never to see a 'bus or hear the shriek of a whistle from one week's end to another. I doubt not by-and-by I shall become so charmingly countrified that, like the old gentlemen farmers, I shall show that I am a lord of the soil by always carrying a pound or two of it, by way of

sample, on my boots and breeches. I am expecting, however, that it will be a sphere of usefulness, not the less so, perhaps, because my antediluvian distance from railways will check my vagrancies, and because my predilections were in favour of any place but here. I am the exclusive pastor of three country places, Thorncliffe, Ecclesfield, and High Green, at two of which I preach every week, and at the third once a fortnight. This is all my week-day work; on Sundays I change regularly with the others. So that you see, apart from my rustication, my disadvantages are not very great."

I visited Mr. and Mrs. Punshon at their quaint parsonage before the year which they spent there had expired. It was a beautiful evening in the early part of August, 1853, when my two friends met me at the Wortley station of the Manchester, Sheffield, and Lincolnshire Railway, with a phaeton to convey me to their home at Chapeltown. They pointed out with pleasure some picturesque views which the drive commanded, for we were not very far from the celebrated Wharnccliffe woods and crags. My contribution to the enjoyment of the ride was "the latest intelligence" from the Bradford Conference, which I had left so recently as one o'clock that very day. Mr. Punshon was with me during the early part of the Conference, sitting in the same pew. The incidents of the Conference, some of them witnessed by us in common, and others of

them by myself after my friend's departure, afforded abundant material for conversation. There were the *ex-cathedra* deliverances of the President, Mr. Lomas, some of them sufficiently striking to be remembered by me to this day ; the able debate on the case of Daniel Walton, and the resignation of George Steward, the greatest blunder of his life, as the issue proved. We also heard at the Preparatory Committees Edward Corderoy and James Heald. Mr. Corderoy spoke like an accomplished orator ; Mr. Heald like a godly statesman. The spirit of the latter was so excellent on this occasion, that some one whispered to me, "He is evidently improved by the loss of his seat for Stockport." Whether this remark were correct or not, it is very certain that when James Heald lost his election, the House of Commons lost from its benches a true Christian patriot, able, wise, and good ; and yet he was misunderstood by some. Mr. Punshon told me that he met Mr. Heald occasionally at Warwick, near Carlisle, and that he thought him cold and distant. I found also, some years after this, in familiar conversations with Mr. Heald at Parr's Wood, that he was not at all captivated with the young preacher whom he heard at Warwick, and was rather pained than pleased with his dazzling rhetoric. These two eminent men got to know one another better as time went on, and to recognise and appreciate each other's fine qualities of head and heart.

One incident of that first Bradford Conference has been much upon my mind lately. One day as we sat together in our pew, a young minister who had come for ordination passed along the aisle. Mr. Punshon called my attention to him, and said, "Is he not a nice-looking young fellow ! Do you know who he is ?" I replied, "No ; I have never seen him before. Who is he ? I exceedingly like his appearance." He answered, "That is Marmaduke C. Osborn." With this incident upon my mind just now, I cannot help thinking how little we know of our future. Had any one said to my friend Punshon in Kirkgate Chapel in 1853 as he pointed out Mr. Osborn to me, "That young man will be the last minister that will see you alive ; he will visit you after eleven o'clock on the night of April 13th, 1881. You will say to him, 'You see me at my worst to-night ; had you been here this morning you would have seen me at my best.' He will pray with you as your friend and colleague, and then take his departure, unapprehensive of danger. But, mark this, before two hours are over you will be a corpse !" Had any one spoken to him thus, he would have treated it as wild and incredible raving. And yet it is what has actually occurred !

My visit to Thorncliffe in 1853 was in response to Mr. Punshon's invitation to assist at the Missionary Anniversary at Mount Pleasant Chapel. He was in my congregation on the Sunday morning, and coming to the pulpit to make

some announcements, he whispered to me, "You give too few verses of the hymns out; our people here are very fond of singing; let them have more verses to sing." Oddly enough the hymn which I gave out immediately, or soon after, contained the lines—

"God is in heaven, and men below :
Be short our times, our words be few !
A solemn reverence checks our songs,
And praise sits silent on our tongues."

A dozen years after this, when labouring myself in the Sheffield East Circuit, I became better acquainted with the musical tastes and abilities of the Thorncliffe people, a contingent of whom went regularly to help at the Handel Festival at the Crystal Palace. I thought, too, how considerate and conciliatory was my good friend. The talent for quarrelling with singers, which some ministers have, was not amongst his manifold gifts.

On the Monday we had a rather remarkable missionary meeting. It was especially distinguished by an incoherent speech, delivered by an African missionary, who had the reputation of being a good worker on the foreign field. Such a confused jumble of words I never listened to; and as he went on at considerable length, and the audience could scarcely extricate an intelligible idea from the verbal entanglement, the feeling in hearing him was one of painful embarrassment. A few of us held a

whispered consultation at the back of the platform as to what should be done. The Thorncliffe gentlemen urged that he should be stopped, but Mr. Punshon, who, in the absence of his superintendent, had charge of the meeting, refused to comply with the suggestion. This was in kindly consideration for the feelings of the speaker, and was characteristic of his uniform brotherliness. The most interested hearer of this singular speech, if speech it should be called, "which shape had none," was apparently a physician from Sheffield, a Unitarian, who happened to be present. While some were perplexed as to what should be done, and others were fearing for the collection, he, from his professional standpoint, was coolly diagnosing the case. "Gentlemen," said he, at the close of the meeting, to a group of us, "to me it is a most interesting case; it is that of a man thinking and speaking a foreign language so long that he has actually forgotten his own."

Although residing in a village, Mr. Punshon had under his own pastoral care several influential families. The heads of the well-known firm, "Newton, Chambers, and Co.," of the Thorncliffe Iron Works and Collieries, were at this time all Methodists connected with Mount Pleasant Chapel. With these estimable families I became acquainted during my visit to Thorncliffe, in 1853, and got to know them very intimately after my own appointment to the

Sheffield East Circuit, in 1864. The heads of these families, Mr. and Mrs. Newton, of Staindrop Lodge, Mr. Thomas Chambers, of Lane End House, Mr. John Chambers, of Belmont, and Mr. George Chambers, of High Green House, have all passed away. The last-mentioned was eight years in the Wesleyan ministry, when ill-health compelled him to retire. The first time that I preached at High Green, I noticed that he sat near me during the service on the platform-pulpit, facing the congregation. At the close he said to me, I suppose in explanation, "You know I am, like yourself, an ordained minister." The brothers Gibson, sons of a minister, nephews by their mother of Mrs. Newton and the Messrs. Chambers, were also resident at Thorncliffe. One of these is well known as the Rev. William Gibson, B.A., of Paris. By the children and young people of these families Mr. Punshon was greatly beloved. One of them, who was a mere child when he went in and out at Staindrop Lodge, Mary Harriet Newton, grew up to be a spiritually-minded and devoted Christian, and died in 1870. One of the young ladies at Belmont was married to Mr. Samuel Plimsoll, who has become so well known in connection with nautical legislation. With the spiritual results of his ministry at Thorncliffe Mr. Punshon was not entirely pleased. In writing to me at the close of his first seven months there, he says: "There is a good work all over the circuit, save

my poor Thorncliffe, where all languishes." Thorncliffe has been now for some years the head of a circuit.

IN SHEFFIELD.

At the beginning of Mr. Punshon's second year in the Sheffield East Circuit he left his rural abode near Thorncliffe and came to reside in the town. The house to which he came occupied an elevated position at the junction of South-street, Park, Norfolk-road, and Shrewsbury Bank, commanding a good view of Sheffield, when it could be seen through its own smoke, and also extensive prospects of the country, reaching as far as the moors of Derbyshire. At this residence I visited him and Mrs. Punshon in the May of 1854. I came to the missionary meetings at Carver-street and Brunswick Chapels, and my dear friends would not let me go to any house but their own, and claimed me as their guest. In accepting the invitation to the meetings I was largely influenced by the assurance that James Montgomery the poet had promised to preside at one of them. When I arrived in Sheffield he was lying at The Mount an unburied corpse. A few days previously the pilgrim-poet pitched for the last time his "moving tent," and was admitted to that "home" which, as the land that was very far off, he had seen before by "faith's foreseeing eye." Not

being able to see the living man, Mr. Punshon accompanied me to The Mount, at the other end of the town, at the blind-drawn windows of which we gazed in pensive silence for some time. Robert Newton, it will be remembered by some, died the same day as James Montgomery. Circumstanced as host and guest were in relation to the missionary anniversary, we could not help speaking of the renowned missionary advocate and of the sweet missionary minstrel who together "entered heaven with prayer." Amongst the poetical tributes which local genius paid to the memory of the deceased poet through the columns of the local press, there was one, if I recollect aright, from the pen of my host. At the funeral his superintendent, Mr. Methley, and the governor of Wesley College, Mr. Waddy, were two of the pall-bearers, and Mr. Punshon was one of the mourners.

At the missionary meetings, as he acted as District Secretary, he did not take the prominent part which usually fell to his lot on such occasions. He spoke at the Brunswick meeting, and some of his friends thought his address was one of his few comparative failures. If it were, he redeemed himself next evening, at Chesterfield, where he spoke with unrestrained eloquence and power, and to which place I was induced to accompany him, although we did not get back with our party, over the Derbyshire hills, until two o'clock in the morning.

At the breakfast meeting at Carver-street he gave us a light and easy speech, and was happy in his playfulness. He even then practised the portrait word-painting at which he excelled in his speeches and lectures. His portraiture of Catherine de Medicis, in his lecture on "The Huguenots," and his sketch of Alfred Cookman, in his speech before the General Conference of the American Methodist Episcopal Church, are amongst his masterpieces in this kind of art. In his speech at the Carver-street breakfast meeting he playfully etched, but without one drop of acid, certain of the younger ministers who were present, and with whom he could make thus free. He delineated Mr. Mather "in his Arcadia at Wadsley," and Mr. Clulow as "trying to raise his Ebenezer," of which chapel, injured by the recent agitation, Mr. Clulow was at that time the resident pastor. Of another estimable minister who was present, the speaker said that "his faults are as infinitesimal as the medicines which he takes." This was complimentary, but, unfortunately, it let out the secret in the presence of his allopathic medical adviser, that the minister, too minutely limned, had gone over to the medical heresy of homœopathy. He did not, I think, venture to paint the governor of Wesley College, who was so much his senior, but for the character of Dr. Waddy he had, I know, an intense admiration, a feeling which was reciprocated by the elder minister. Dr. Waddy's kind

attentions to myself during this, my first visit to Sheffield, I attributed largely to my good fortune in being "Punshon's friend."

I am not writing Dr. Punshon's biography in this selection of early recollections, otherwise I might write much of his three years' sojourn in Sheffield. He formed there some of the strongest friendships of his loving heart. It was, moreover, the scene of his first domestic bereavement, for there lies what is mortal of his first folded lamb. The plan of my remarks and the space I have allotted myself will not allow me to name the large number of families in Sheffield with which he formed attachments. I could speak of them all from personal knowledge, acquired during my six years' residence there. I will mention but the Foster family, with which Dr. Punshon became connected by marriage about eight years ago. The widow, who, since the fourteenth of April last, has been sympathised with and prayed for throughout the Connexion, was a member of my own society class at Norfolk-street Chapel. Her name, as Mary Foster, appeared upon my book during the three years I had charge of the class. Her excellent parents I was intimately acquainted with, and when her father died, it fell to my lot to speak to the bereaved family and congregation from the Norfolk-street pulpit words of comfort and hope from the appropriate text: "And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him."

When first honoured myself with an invitation to the circuit, I consulted my friend Punshon as to whether I should accept it or another. He wrote at once: "*I prefer Sheffield East almost to any circuit I know, but that may be no rule for you.*" When I had been only a few days in the circuit he wrote again: "*You will be very happy, I hope, in Sheffield. Dear old Norfolk-street! I have many ties to that chapel.*"

HIS FIRST APPEARANCE AT EXETER HALL.

His first speech at Exeter Hall, of which he wrote me an account, was delivered at the May meeting of the Wesleyan Missionary Society in 1853. He sat for hours on the platform, not knowing whether he had to speak or not, when at last Dr. Hoole put a resolution in his hand, and whispered, "We want you to second this; twenty minutes at most, and as much less as you like." He said it was "a glorious meeting," but did not tell how well he did himself in the brief space allotted to him. Knowing that his speech would be read far and wide, he complained of the "absurd blunders" made by the reporters. "They make me talk of 'Ahitophel's treachery,' as if I had not read the Bible better than that." "They stick into my lips a French word, of which I am not sure whether it means classes or sausages." "The idea of

changing *giants* into *gentlemen*!" In the sentence, "The foolish workmen who are quarrelling about the scaffolding," he was made to say *hovering* instead of *quarrelling*. "As if," he says, "they were a new species of owl, which naturalists have not classified, a bird with a special taste for timber." Towards the close of the letter he adds:—"I have forgotten to tell you the most gratifying thing to me: not the congregations, though Spitalfields was full, and Hinde-street crowded; nor the collections, though morning was £13 and evening £11 more than last year; nor the reception at the meeting, though it was warm, and several sentences were drowned in cheering; but that, after the meeting, the old doctor, the great lion, the veritable Jabez Bunting, hobbled across the committee-room, for the express purpose of shaking hands with me, and telling me that it gave him pleasure to see and hear me there. This was worth a dozen platform 'Hears' and a million cheers of the mobocracy." Mr. Punshon was then only in the seventh year of his ministry; and that he was asked to take part in the anniversary services—a rare thing for so young a man in those days—he attributed to Dr. Osborn. In the prospect of this "London work" he wrote to me, "'I exceedingly fear and quake.' The Lord will give me strength in my day. I don't expect I shall have to speak in the Hall. If I do, it will be a terrible affair."

HIS LECTURE ON BUNYAN.

Mr. Punshon's sermon at Spitalfields Chapel on Elijah brought him an urgent request from the secretary of the Young Men's Christian Association to turn the sermon into a lecture and deliver it for the institution which he represented. This was the origin of "The Prophet of Horeb," the first lecture which he delivered at Exeter Hall. By the time he had to deliver the second—"John Bunyan"—I was resident in London, and he and Mrs. Punshon stayed at my house. The day he gave the lecture he spent in going about from one end of the metropolis to the other, in seeing friends, and arrived at my residence rather late for tea. While dressing he glanced occasionally at two small cards, on which catch-words were written. "What are these?" I asked. "My lecture," he replied. Glancing at them while at the dressing-table for ten or twelve minutes was all he did that day in the way of preparation for delivering the lecture that evening, for the first time since its composition, and before an audience of three thousand. The lecture, or rather oration, occupied more than an hour and a half in the delivery. I do not remember that he once looked at the cards in his hand, or that he ever hesitated for a word or had to recall one. He spoke with his usual captivating elocution, and with immense energy and force. Feeling amongst the audience grew; enthusiasm

was awakened, and gathered force as he went on. At last, at one of his magnificent climaxes, the vast concourse of people sprang simultaneously to their feet, and oh! what a scene of excitement! Hats and handkerchiefs were waved; sticks and umbrellas were used in frantic pounding of the floor; hands, feet, and voices were united in swelling the acclamations; some shouted "Bravo!" some "Hurrah!" some "Hallelujah!" and others "Glory be to God!" Such a tornado of applause as swept through Exeter Hall, and swelled from floor to ceiling, I have never witnessed before or since.

At the close of the lecture several gentlemen urged me to dissuade him from going to Cambridge next day to preach, as they thought rest was essential after such a tremendous effort. After supper he and I chatted into the small hours. He told me that he composed the lecture while walking in his study at Leeds and tossing a penny from his thumb which he caught as it fell. He wrote the whole of it on his memory first, and then sat down and put it on paper, word for word. At last he asked, "What o'clock is it, Mac?" Quoting from the peroration of the lecture, I answered, "It's morning! it's morning!" He laughed, and said, "I did not expect so speedy an application of my own words to my own case." Next day he went to Cambridge, and fulfilled his, I believe, first engagement in that University town.

HIS LECTURE ON THE HUGUENOTS.

His grand oration,—misnomered a lecture,—on the Huguenots, had for its special object the financial relief of Spitalfields Chapel. When Robert Inglis, in 1856, became superintendent of the Spitalfields Circuit, which then included what is now the St. George's Circuit, he found the whole of the chapel interests oppressed by an enormous load of debt. The bad case of Spitalfields Chapel was aggravated by the fact that the trustees were all dead with the exception of three, and that of these only one, and he a man of limited means and non-resident, was willing to act. The congregation, which at one time was large and flourishing, was greatly reduced in number and influence through the deterioration of the neighbourhood, the removal of leading families to the suburbs, and especially through the great agitation which followed the Conference of 1849. With a diminished pew-rental the income of the chapel was inadequate to the expenditure. A new trust could not be formed, as gentlemen were unwilling to take up the burden in so hopeless a case of huge financial responsibilities. Mr. Inglis undertook to grapple with difficulties by which some of his predecessors had been intimidated. He received permission from the Conference to solicit help beyond the limits of his circuit, and he obtained the powerful aid of Mr. Punshon on behalf of his

scheme. The latter had engaged to succeed me at Poplar in 1858; so that the Spitalfields Circuit had thus the prospect of being favoured with his popular ministry, and Mr. Inglis expected to have him as a colleague for one year. Before the time came for ratifying the engagement, Mrs. Punshon's health was such that the doctors advised that she should not reside at the east of London, and that if her husband removed to the metropolis at all, it should be to the West-end. Meanwhile, through the noble efforts of Mr. Arthur, a large chapel was built at Bayswater,—a part of London which was then as much a “Methodist wilderness” as those rural parts of Surrey to which Mr. Peacock first applied that significant name,—and for this new chapel the services of the popular young minister were sought. Mr. William Pearce, of Poplar, and his co-steward, with characteristic nobleness, released Mr. Punshon from his engagement, although while holding their coveted prize they were the envy of all the circuit-stewards in London. Knowing, however, the disappointment which he unwillingly caused to the circuit by his appointment to Bayswater, instead of to Poplar, he was ever ready to show his good-will towards the London Third Circuit. After his engagement was actually made, and when there was every probability of its being fulfilled, he refused purposely to visit the circuit. During this period I wrote him an urgent request to come and

preach for us, but his answer was, "I show no pattern-cards!" After the engagement was dissolved he made his appearance in Spitalfields Chapel, and discoursed to one of his own huge crowds in his own thrilling style on "Walk in wisdom towards them that are without," &c. I cannot now remember whether he ever told me that it was partly in the way of making some reparation to the London Third Circuit that he consented to aid Mr. Inglis in the way in which Mr. Inglis proposed. I feel no doubt, however, that his generous nature was influenced by this consideration.

The subject of his lecture,—if I must call it by that name,—was determined by the history of Spitalfields Chapel. This fine old edifice was originally a French church, built for and used by the Protestant refugees who were driven from France by the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes. In 1819 it was purchased by the Methodists. During the preparation of his lecture I saw him occasionally, sometimes in his study in Horbury-crescent, and sometimes in my own in Northampton-square, and I could plainly see that his work brought him enjoyment as well as trouble. In its inception and composition; in its arrangement and rearrangement; in the conception of the ideas and the finding of fitting words; in the coining of apt phrases and the discovery of felicitous illustrations; in the expression of scintillating

thought and the piling up of magnificent climax ; in the picturesque grouping of events and the dramatic delineation of character ;—in all this he felt, I am persuaded, that peculiar kind of gratification in the composition of his prose which Cowper describes as belonging to the composition of poetry : “There is a pleasure in poetic pains which only poets know.”

The “Huguenots” was first delivered in St. James’s Hall, Piccadilly, with the Earl of Shaftesbury in the chair. This was not the first time that the lecturer and his noble chairman met. In February, 1855, Mr. Punshon went up from Sheffield to Exeter Hall to speak at the annual meeting of the Young Men’s Christian Association, with Lord Shaftesbury presiding. In sending me an account of that meeting, he wrote : “The Earl was pleased to characterise my address as one of ‘prodigious power,’ but intimated that there was just a danger lest in seeking for the elegant phrase I should overlay the sturdy thought.” What the Earl thought of the lecture on the Huguenots was visible enough in his features as he sat in the chair in St. James’s Hall. I have myself seen his lordship presiding at excited meetings, when he so managed to hide his feelings—for no doubt he felt—as to present an almost cast-metal immobility of countenance ; but under the magic power of the oratory to which he that night listened, I noticed that the usual rigidity of his lordship’s features relaxed, and that he

showed intensity of feeling. The charge for the reserved seats that evening was half-a-guinea each, and the audience was very select as well as very numerous. I heard it said that the Bishop of London, now Archbishop of Canterbury, and Leigh Hunt were in the audience, but that statement I have not been able to verify. It is certain, however, that on one occasion His Grace of Canterbury so greatly admired one of Dr. Punshon's addresses which he heard, that he wrote him in commendation of it. The last time that the Primate of all England, and the late senior secretary of the Wesleyan Missionary Society occupied a common platform was, I believe, at the Sunday-School Centenary celebration in the City of London. At the close of the lecture at St. James's Hall there was an amusing anticlimax. A letter was handed to the great orator in the committee-room. It was from an Essex curate, and was something to this effect :—that the writer understood that the gentleman he addressed was a public lecturer ; that they wanted a lecture at the Mechanics' Institute in his village and wished him to come ; that he did not know his fee, but if he would come and lecture, he could promise him that his travelling expenses should be paid, and that they would find him "a bed at the Swan."

Mr. Punshon redelivered his lecture in crowded halls to delighted audiences in many of the large towns and cities of the United Kingdom. Mr. Inglis went with him to

some of the places to solicit, at the same time, private subscriptions on behalf of Spitalfields Chapel. The two ministers met with two widely different kinds of reception. Mr. Inglis said to me afterwards: "Ah! Mr. Punshon, in every instance, receives rapturous applause; but I get, in many cases, the cold shoulder or a rude rebuff." So it was. The masses who went to hear the orator cared little either for Spitalfields Chapel, or for the dead Huguenots. They paid money to hear Punshon lecture for exactly the same reason that they paid money to hear Jenny Lind sing. Their comparative indifference to the financial objects of the lecture and to the subject treated constitutes the attendance of the crowds who heard him the strongest testimony to the oratorical powers of Dr. Punshon. So great was the rush at the Free Trade Hall, Manchester, to hear his Bunyan lecture that, when the doors were opened, a minister who was waiting to enter, was carried bodily up into the gallery without ever putting a foot on the stairs! That minister, who told me this himself, was the late Michael Johnson. The Huguenot oration, besides aiding in some cases local objects, and benefiting, I believe, in many cases, the minds and hearts of those who heard it, produced for Spitalfields Chapel upwards of one thousand pounds. Mr. Inglis, in moving a vote of thanks in the London District Meeting to his generous and gifted brother, said, amongst other things, "Mr. Punshon is 'a man of a thousand,' and I hope before

long he will be a man of a 'hundred.'" At the following Conference (1859), William Morley Punshon, having "travelled fourteen years," was, upon the nomination of Dr. Osborn, elected into the Legal Hundred. I know of no other case in which a minister was thus elected the very first hour he became eligible for the honour.

How far Dr. Punshon's oratorical efforts contributed to bring about his premature decease, or whether they were contributory to that end at all, is a subject too difficult and painful for me to discuss. They must have told upon his exquisitely fine nervous organisation. In writing to me from Sheffield, in October, 1853, in prospect of his first lecture at Exeter Hall, he says, "I have to finish a sermon, write a memoir of my uncle for the Magazine, and last, not least—woe of woes!—to prepare a lecture for the Young Men's Christian Association, Exeter Hall. I shrink, falter, tremble, repent, and exceedingly fear and quake." Again in writing to me in 1855, he says, "I have just refused to lecture for the Young Men's Christian Association in their next course; I cannot stand the havoc it plays with my nerves." One thing is certain, that he had no wish to abridge his days, for love of life with him was strong. No one would have said "Amen" for himself to the petition of our Lord in His intercessory prayer more fervently than he; "I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil."

He was conscious himself of his more than instinctive abhorrence of death and love of life. In writing to me from Toronto, after referring to the death of a young lady in England, he adds : " Well, if the life is to purpose and of faith, it matters not, though I am not insensible to the loss of being cut short in the midst of the days. I often think my love of life is morbid ; but He who is the Master of the human heart can loosen the fastest love." He has now verified the words of James Montgomery :—

" By death I shall escape from death,
And life eternal again."

I must now, for the present at all events, close these Personal Recollections. I ask all who read what I have written to glorify God for the remarkable gifts which He bestowed upon His servant, and for the grace which led William Morley Punshon to consecrate his noble powers to noblest ends.

WILLIAM MORLEY PUNSHON, LL.D.,

Born at Doncaster, May 29th, 1824.

Died at his Residence, Tranby, Brixton Rise, London,

April 14th, 1881.

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